

# **YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM**

## **PROGRESS REPORT**

For the Period of April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008  
Completed on May 18, 2008

PROGRAM FUNDED BY:

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
DEVELOPMENT**

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## 1. SUMMARY

The Youth and Ecological Restoration Program (YER) provides youth under nineteen, who are struggling with a variety of issues in their lives, with one-on-one work experience, training and support. Funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), youth work with community members to restore the environmental health of local watersheds. Through this work youth learn social, communication and community building skills that will support them in becoming confident, respectful and productive members of our society.

Over the four year history of YER (July 2004 to March 2008), one hundred youth participants have been engaged with seventy-three community groups. Youth involved in the twenty-hour program have had a ninety-five percent completion rate. This report covers the MCFD funding period of April 2007 to March 2008, which supported twenty-eight youth participants. Through involvement with positive and caring community members, the youths' learning focuses on five main goals: building community relationships; gaining valued work experience; improving ecological knowledge; increasing personal and social skills; and enhancing communication skills.

YER has an established, reliable and valid evaluation method that entails an interview process with the youth to document what they have learned. Youth also prepare presentation notes and give speeches to community groups. One youth spoke at a North Island College conference and the speech was later published in a local newspaper and magazine. Program promotion included a presentation at an international conference on community based action research, lectures at college and university courses, and local media press releases.

In 2007 a second phase of YER was developed with funding from the Vancouver Foundation. In YER II youth build on the ecological, collaboration and communication skills they learned in the first phase of the program (YER I). From September 2007 to April 2008 five youth completed YER II. Future options for YER include: replicating YER in other communities; developing a website; providing opportunities for program graduates to present at conferences and forums; creating an internship program; and continuing YER I and YER II in the Comox Valley.

YER addresses MCFD policies of prevention, intervention and support. Vulnerable youth leave the program with a greater sense of self worth and belonging within the community. YER has a wide range of community support and collaboration, confirmed by letters of support from youth care professionals and environmental groups. YER is creating a lasting legacy for the youth, and the social and environmental future of the Comox Valley community. With sustainable funding this worthwhile program can continue to provide our most vulnerable youth with opportunities to learn that a better future is possible, both for themselves and their community.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Youth and Ecological Restoration Program (YER) is a twenty-hour work experience and training program that supports vulnerable youth under the age of nineteen in the Comox Valley. The youth conduct ecological restoration work with community members in local watersheds, and broaden their perspective on both the human and natural worlds. Involvement in this work facilitates youth building healthy interpersonal relationships, personal confidence and self worth.

From July 2004 to March 2008, one hundred youth participated in the YER first phase (YER I), which was funded by Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children's Child Welfare Advisory Committee, and Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Funding provided by the Vancouver Foundation's Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee permitted a second phase (YER II) to be developed for YER I graduates. From September 2007 to April 2008 five youth completed YER II.

YER continues to produce successful outcomes by providing one-on-one support for vulnerable youth by way of a combination of social and ecological experiences. The program addresses MCFD juvenile justice objectives, through prevention and early intervention practices. This report documents YER I results from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008, when MCFD funding supported twenty-eight youth being involved in the program. It includes a summary of YER II activities, and provides a review of the seventy-three Comox Valley community groups that have benefited from interactions with YER over its four year history.

## **2. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

YER continues to build community partnerships, creating a cornerstone for the program and its youth participants. These partnerships have been instrumental in developing a solid foundation of support for YER within the Comox Valley community, as well as building bridges, alliances and awareness between local groups and individuals. The youth service groups and environmental organizations gain an appreciation of their respective community roles and contributions. Senior members of local groups have opportunities to connect with young people. Bringing together multiple generations allows them to learn from each other about the experience of being a youth, in past times and what it means now. The result of these interactions is stronger intergenerational relationships that create a greater and richer understanding of diversity in our community.

### **April 2007 to March 2008**

Twenty-eight youth participated in YER from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008 (Table 1). The youth were twelve to eighteen years old; nine were girls and nineteen were boys. Twenty-seven youth completed the twenty-hour program and one did not complete (Table 1a). The four youth organizations referring youth to YER were: MCFD (11), Comox Valley Alternate Schools (11), Comox Valley Community Justice Centre (5) and Comox Valley Family Services (1). Table 1b provides more detailed information on the referral agencies.

In order to determine YER participants' connections with other youth services in the Comox Valley, each of the youth were asked for information on their involvement with other groups. Out of the total twenty-eight youth, twenty-five had connections to MCFD, twelve with John Howard Society, ten with The Linc (youth resource centre), eight with the Comox Valley Community Justice Centre, and five with Comox Valley Boys and Girls Club (Table 1c).

The twenty-eight youth conducted ecological work with thirteen environmental organizations, and three government agencies (Table 1d). Six groups are especially supportive of YER and continuously provide work experiences for the youth participants. These are: Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards, Tsolum River Restoration Society, Oyster River Enhancement Society, Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society, Fanny Bay Enhancement Society and Morrison Creek Streamkeepers.

The twenty-seven youth who completed YER with an oral presentation to a community group gave speeches at nineteen different locations (Table 1e). Eight were at pre-schools, elementary, middle, alternate, and post secondary schools; four were at youth groups; two at Comox Valley Rotary Clubs; two at MCFD team meetings; one at an environmental group meeting; one at a senior citizens' residential home; and one at the women's resource centre. Twenty-one youth received fifty dollars and six youth completed YER with community service hour contributions.

### **July 2004 to March 2008 Review**

Throughout the history of YER, one hundred youth participants have been directly involved with seventy-three Comox Valley groups (Appendix A). The youth have achieved an overall ninety-five percent completion rate for the twenty-hour program. Six groups referred youth to the program; twenty-seven groups had youth conduct ecological restoration work; and forty groups had youth present speeches about their YER experiences. The capability for YER to extend to different areas of the community has been demonstrated and is remarkable in the diversity of the sectors covered. It confirms the success of the program in fulfilling a need in the community.

## **3. PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES**

Initial funding from MCFD was held in trust by the Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children, Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC). CWAC was entrusted with the MCFD funds to finance the development of projects that would support Vancouver Island children, youth and families. To ensure success of the projects, CWAC hired community psychologist, Dr. Jennifer Mullett to assist project leaders in creating evaluation plans.

The evaluation plan has been a powerful guide that led to YER being one of the top three most successful CWAC projects (a letter of support from Dr. Jennifer Mullett is attached as Appendix B). It also contributed to YER sustaining its operations beyond the original funding period to be funded directly by MCFD from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008. YER evaluations include interviewing youth to determine how the program is benefiting them, and obtaining letters of support from community groups. These documents are an important measure of YER successes, and selected quotes are presented below.

An annual YER celebration is held to honour accomplishments of youth involved in the program, and a brief description of the 2008 event is given. One of the past YER strategic goals was to create a second phase of the program. With funding provided by the Vancouver Foundation, YER II started in September 2007. Details on YER II progress are provided in this report. Program promotion continues to be an important element of raising awareness about the benefits of YER. Marketing occurred through newspaper and magazine articles, and presentations at post secondary schools and conferences.

## **YER Goals and Youth Quotes**

The five main goals established in the beginning of the program in July 2004, are still being used to monitor YER effectiveness for vulnerable youth. These goals are: building healthy community relationships; gaining valuable work experience; improving ecological knowledge; increasing personal and social skills; and enhancing communication skills.

Youth are interviewed at four stages during their participation in the twenty-hour program: at the start of the program; at the end of each work day; when work experience activities are complete; and at the conclusion of their public presentation. The interviews are then analyzed to determine each youth's learning accomplishments. This year the interview analysis was further summarized into percentages of knowledge gained by the youth (Table 2).

The most learning occurred in ecological knowledge and community relationships, and the least in work experience (Table 2). Personal, social and communication skill development was high, as the majority of youth gained learning in these areas. Quotes are given below to illustrate each of the five goals in the words of the youth participants.

### **GOAL # 1: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Cooperation, Support and Compassion; Positive Role Models and Mentoring; Increased Community Capacity and Caring

- “Community organizations are good for youth; it gives teenagers and other people more ideas of what’s around them. It was fun to work with other people because when you work with other people you get more knowledge on something.” *(Participant #80)*
- “It was really interesting and fun to work with other people; I really liked it a lot. It was really welcoming, like when you feel like you are fitting into something.” *(Participant #83)*
- “I appreciate what you are doing for the young people in this community because it bridges the gap between the elder generation and it passes a common knowledge of the world. It gives youth an understanding of how their actions affect everything around them.” *(Participant #96)*

### **GOAL # 2: GAINING VALUED WORK EXPERIENCE**

Data Collection Methods; Working with Tools; Job Variety

- “I learned that scientific data has to be as accurate as you can get it and that means if you have to count five times – count five times. With every job you have to be accurate because if you get sloppy you can get fired.” *(Participant #79)*
- “Almost everything I did was a skill and experience gained. Everything I did was different than anything else I’ve done.” *(Participant #85)*
- “We planted trees, how to dig a hole to reforest an area around where the fish are so it doesn’t erode at the banks so in years to come there will still be a pond there for the fish.” *(Participant #86)*

### **GOAL # 3: IMPROVING ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Ecosystem Cycles and Interconnections; Identification Techniques for Plants, Animals and Fish; Understanding Environmental Impacts

- “Salmon play a huge role in our Comox Valley ecosystem, as they bring nutrients for animals and trees alike. Without a strong supply of salmon spawning each year, the natural balance would be destroyed.” *(Participant #89)*

- “I am learning about parts of the environment and how important everything in the environment is as important as everything else. Trees are as important as fish, fish are as important as the sky, the sky is as important as soil. To help out the environment is kind of like being a part of Mother Nature.” *(Participant #93)*
- “One of the big problems for aquatic birds that feed in fields is lead poisoning. The main victims of lead poisoning are ducks, swans and geese. If other birds, like crows, ravens and eagles eat the dead bird with lead poisoning they get poisoned, too.” *(Participant #97)*

#### **GOAL # 4: INCREASING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

Meaningful Participation and Empowerment; Commitment, Respect and Responsibility; Accomplishment, Self-esteem and Success

- “I learned responsibility, how to be responsible when you do something that you say you are going to do and you do it right and you are responsible for your actions, you are responsible for what you do.” *(Participant #73)*
- “It was the first time that someone had actually helped me by actually getting me to answer questions instead of telling me and I can remember it better that way. It felt like you were encouraging me and I felt like I could do better.” *(Participant #74)*
- “I learned about how to approach a situation, how to approach it properly instead of drastically that will get you in trouble and how to make decisions right so you are protecting yourself at the same time.” *(Participant #100)*

#### **GOAL # 5: ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Public Speaking and Education; Active Listening and Engagement; Interpersonal Relationships

- “We went to the Rod and Gun Club to a fishing derby and caught some rainbow trout and helped an elderly man have fun. It was cool to witness this and I was very honoured. I learned it felt good and gentle to help an elderly man. It was courteous, something he didn’t get to do everyday.” *(Participant #82)*
- “At first I was really nervous and once I got through the first few sentences it was really easy. Everyone there made me feel great after I was done the speech. It is hard not to feel good about yourself when everyone is congratulating you.” *(Participant #84)*
- “It was just nice to take what I learned and teach someone else. I think they learned if they take care of their environment that means they are taking care of themselves. It feels good.” *(Participant #87)*

One youth gave a speech to a youth group at Wachaui Friendship Centre, as well as to a North Island College, Articulation Conference for an audience of people who train human service and social workers at colleges throughout British Columbia. The presentation notes were published in The Island Word newspaper and Watershed Sentinel magazine. An excerpt follows:

“Wendy’s program worked for me. I was forced to be patient, learn new concepts, accept inevitable truths, pray for change, and enjoy the moment. This experience slowed me down, which resulted in it being easier for me to confront myself and begin to fix my personal problems. I think today’s youth need support, not answers, and daily doses of river water, forest floor, huckleberries and sunshine.” *(Participant # 78)*

## **Community Support**

Demonstrating community support for YER in 2007 and 2008, eighteen letters were provided by Comox Valley youth service workers and environmental groups. Quotes are presented below:

*Anne Davidson, Children and Youth Mental Health  
MCFD, Courtenay, BC*

“The program gave them purpose and a place to be themselves without judgment. They soared and experienced themselves as whole: this is something they will remember. Thank you for creating such a program and thank you for being with these youth, one on one, and treating them with the dignity, respect and patience that they deserve.”

“Funding for this program is essential for the well being of this community just as it has proven to be essential learning and support in the lives of the youth.”

*Doug Hillian, Provincial Youth Justice Consultant  
MCFD, Victoria, BC*

“I have been particularly impressed with your success engaging community elders from conservation groups to mentor and guide the youth. In bridging several generation gaps, you have creatively integrated the learning opportunities in the natural environment with the promotion of pro-social skills through multi-generation interaction. This has helped promote mutual understanding and community capacity building, while boosting the self-esteem of troubled young people and supporting them to make better choices.”

“Ideally, you would receive multi-year funding assurance and the program’s success would be replicated in other communities.”

*Kevin Rushton, Youth Probation Officer  
MCFD, Courtenay, BC*

“Youth Probation Services provides Court ordered community supervision of youth who are in conflict with the law. These youth are often lacking a real connection to the welfare of the community. Many youth have no positive experiences or sense of personal accomplishments.”

“The Youth and Ecological Restoration Project aims to support those youth by providing opportunities for hands-on skill development with adult mentors in a supportive environment. The youth involved in this project are given the opportunity to build personal protective factors such as self esteem and community investment and attachment.”

*Chip Ross, President  
Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards, Courtenay, BC*

“I have observed an increased awareness, interest, capacity and esteem in the youth involved in the YER program. Wendy interacts with the youth in a way that strongly encourages them to participate and learn, and to take with them an increased sense of accomplishment and self worth.”

“I strongly encourage ongoing support of this program, as it is valuable in many ways, including volunteer-youth interactions, environmental protection and restoration, and the future of our youth. The experience of YER can be pivotal in the lives of youth involved. YER should be considered a high priority for the social and environmental health of this community, and provided the necessary resources to carry out program activities for years to come.”

*Judy Ackinclose, President  
Fanny Bay Enhancement Society, Fanny Bay, BC*

“We believe that there is a commensurate advantage to be realized by the people enrolled in your initiative. They gain technical knowledge in all manner of duties associated with the operation of a community salmon hatchery and habitat enhancement projects. More importantly from the

perspective of the youngster is learning life skills. These include, amongst other things, the ability to listen and follow directions, to practice self discipline and to effectively interact with others.”

“Sustainable funding is important as it relieves program coordinators of the time consuming and mind numbing requirement to secure funding sources thus freeing up time that can be devoted to clients.”

*Russ Petersen, Project Coordinator, Morrison Creek Smolt Fence  
Morrison Creek Streamkeepers, Courtenay, BC*

“This project and others like it have the benefit of providing the young workers with experiences that are often unavailable in the normal course of their lives, and provides an opportunity for them to give back to the community. Along with these experiences, comes the interaction with a new peer group. These interactions give community members the chance to see young people in a positive light as they work side by side towards common goals, potentially leading to expanded networks that may open up opportunities of employment and friendship.”

“It is our belief that the opportunity to have Wendy and her kids involved in our project, and available for other projects, is an extremely valuable asset to the community as a whole and she should be given continued financial support for her efforts.”

### **Community Celebration**

An annual YER community celebration is held to honour the accomplishments of the youth who have participated. There have been four of these celebrations and there is always a good turnout of supporters. Over the past two years, pizza, pop, coffee and a homemade celebration cake have been contributed by local businesses and individuals. We start the event by sitting in a circle and having each person share a special place or experience with nature. An overview is given of the year’s activities from the youth, community organizations and the YER coordinator. Then we socialize, share food and have fun. This year’s celebration was attended by thirty-five people.

### **Youth and Ecological Restoration Program Phase II (YER II)**

YER II is in the preliminary stages of development. Entry requirement is that youth be graduates of YER I, and they be genuinely motivated to build on skills they gained in the first phase of the program. Youth who show initiative and interest to continue their learning are given priority placements. The focus is on a specific environmental project to learn more detailed ecological information, research techniques, and collaboration and communication skills.

For YER II completion, the youth lead a guided tour of the project site and are presented with a YER II certificate and hooded jacket, a letter of reference and a fifty dollar honourarium. Five youth completed YER II in the fall of 2007 and spring 2008. The 2007 projects were: establish a Garry Oak forest ecological plot; and radio track summer chinook salmon in the Puntledge River. Guided tours of both projects happened September 30th on BC Rivers Day. In 2008 two youth were involved with Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society, an organization that cares for sick and injured birds. At their open house in April, the youth gave three guided tours of the facility.

YER II plans include conducting additional evaluation of YER I graduates to monitor if their participation in the program led to any long term improvements in their lives. Questions were developed to coordinate with YER I goals and meetings will be established to conduct interviews with the program graduates. Youth who participate in YER II will also be asked preliminary, post work and post presentation questions to document knowledge they have gained.

### **Program Promotion**

Opportunities to promote YER present themselves throughout the year, and an annual YER celebration honours the youth for their accomplishments. Two Comox Valley groups included YER acknowledgments in their newspaper articles, and one on their website. This recognition exemplifies the profile of YER in our community. YER articles were published in newspapers and magazines, and presentations were made at post secondary colleges and conferences.

In April 2007, the Comox Valley Record (CVR) published a photo of Comox Valley MLA, Stan Hagen, presenting YER Coordinator, Wendy Kotilla, with a one-time provincial grant to operate the program during the 2007/2008 fiscal year. In September 2007, CVR printed a YER article announcing YER II funding from the Vancouver Foundation; and both the CVR and Comox Valley Echo (CVE) had articles by Comox Valley Project Watershed Society inviting people to celebrate BC Rivers Day by taking walks in the Puntledge and Tsolum watersheds led by YER participants and other professionals.

In November 2007, Rotary Club of Cumberland Centennial submitted an article for their website ([www.rotarycc.org](http://www.rotarycc.org)) about a youth participant presenting at one of their 7:00 am meetings. The December 2007/January 2008 Infocus Magazine had an article about the Courtenay Fish & Game Protective Association acknowledging YER contribution at their 2007 Fishing Forever Program. In March 2008 CVE and CVR had press releases advertising the YER community celebration, as well as follow up articles and pictures describing the event.

One youth participant did a presentation at a North Island College (NIC), Human Service Worker Program class; another did an additional presentation at NIC Articulation Conference for people who train human service and social workers throughout BC. The latter participant also had her presentation notes published in September/October 2007 issue of Watershed Sentinel magazine ([www.watershedsentinel.ca](http://www.watershedsentinel.ca)) and in the July issue of The Island Word newspaper.

In March 2008 a presentation was given by YER coordinator (Wendy Kotilla) at a Community Psychology course at the Malaspina College, Duncan Campus, taught by Dr. Jennifer Mullett (see Attachment B). A YER power point presentation was developed and given at the Community-University Partnerships Conference in Victoria, BC in early May 2008. The conference was the largest gathering for community based research and collaboration. The YER paper "Youth and Community Relationships" will be published and is currently posted in the proceedings (pages 149-152) on the CU Expo 2008 website (<http://www.cuexpo08.ca/program/proceedings.html>).

## **4. BUDGET UPDATE**

The final budget for YER from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008 was \$34,481.96 (Table 3a). Funds were provided by MCFD in the amount of \$34,000.00 and \$482.93 in interest was gained from investing the principal in a term deposit. Expense items are listed below and presented in Table 3a. Monthly expenditures are presented in Table 3b.

- **Professional fees** included fees, administration costs and program evaluation.
- **Honouraria** for youth participants was calculated at \$50 for 21 youth participants.
- **Equipment** purchased for YER operation was a digital camera to provide documentation.
- **Transportation** costs were calculated at \$.45/km for 7416 km.
- **Supplies** included office, lunch costs and general materials required for YER work.
- **Miscellaneous** expenses included program insurance; bank charges; and food items and room rental for the YER celebration.

- **In-kind Contributions** were given by environmental organizations providing training and work tools; compose the annual YER report; and donations for the YER celebration.

An additional table demonstrates 2007/2008 monthly expenditures (Table 3b). YER work experience and training for the youth is normally seasonal type work, so most of the program costs occur during the spring and fall.

## **5. FUTURE OPTIONS**

YER has proven to be a cost effective program that delivers consistent and dependable results. One of the most difficult tasks of many valuable programs is to solicit annual funding. My hope for YER is that more sustainable funding will be secured to allow the delivery of this worthwhile program to continue, so that our most vulnerable youth will learn how to create a better future for themselves and their community. Options for YER future development include the following:

- Continue concurrent operation YER Phase I and II to benefit Comox Valley vulnerable youth.
- Promote YER in other parts of BC through presentations at conferences and forums by the coordinator and a couple of youth participants.
- Develop a YER website.
- Create a YER internship program to train previous graduates.
- Hire a second person to assist with YER program organizing, facilitation and delivery.
- Make a DVD of YER participants conducting program work for illustration at presentations.
- Replicate the YER program in other communities.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

YER is a unique and innovative program, based on connecting vulnerable youth with the natural world and the human community. Each of the youth are treated with dignity and respect, and allowed to learn at their own pace without judgment. Involving them with meaningful work and caring adults supports them in building self esteem and a sense of belonging. Engagement in these cultural activities connects youth with the larger community, enhances their personal insights, and has the ability to transform their lives.

Helping youth to feel a sense of inclusion contributes to building a whole community; healthy relationships are the very heart of healthy communities. A whole and healthy community has no separation between the human and natural worlds; it is based on relationships of interdependence and cooperation with each other and the Earth. Through their involvement with YER, the youth have traveled a journey together with their community, side by side down a very good path, and have come to experience a better relationship with the people and place called home.

**TABLE 1: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)**

**YOUTH PARTICIPANT SUMMARY TABLE FOR APRIL 1, 2007 TO MARCH 31, 2008.**

YER is a 20-hour work experience/training program for Comox Valley vulnerable youth funded by BC, Ministry of Children and Family Development. Youth were given a number to protect their anonymity. There were 28 youth participants (Numbers 73-100); 9 girls and 19 boys; ages 12 to 18.

**Table 1a: YER COMPLETION**

**YER completion required finishing 20 hours and giving a community presentation.**

	<b>YOUTH TOTALS</b>
Total Complete: Participant # 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99	27
Total Incomplete: # 100	1
<b>TOTAL 555 WORK EXPERIENCE HOURS</b>	<b>28</b>

**Table 1b: YOUTH ORGANIZATION REFERRALS**

**Youth participants were referred by five agencies in the Comox Valley.**

MCFD: # 73, 74, 75, 79, 80, 83, 86, 88, 90, 92, 100 Probation Services 75, 83, 86, 100; Parent Teen Mediation 73, 74, 80 Mental Health Team 79, 88, 90; Over Twelve Team 92	11
Comox Valley School District: # 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 99 Sandwick Alternate 77, 81, 82, 91; Nala'atsi Program 76, 93, 94, 95, 96 Independent Learning 99; Vanier Senior Secondary 78	11
Comox Valley Community Justice Centre: # 84, 85, 87, 89, 98	5
Comox Valley Family Services: # 97	1
<b>TOTAL 4 YOUTH REFERRAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>28</b>

**Table 1c: YOUTH ORGANIZATION CONNECTIONS**

**Youth participants were interconnected with other Comox Valley youth services.**

MCFD: # 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100	25
John Howard Society: # 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 86, 87, 89, 90, 94, 95, 100	12
The Linc (youth resource centre): Participant # 73, 74, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 90, 92, 96	10
Comox Valley Community Justice Centre: # 78, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 98	8
Comox Valley Boys and Girls Club: # 74, 79, 88, 90, 97	5
<b>TOTAL 5 YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS</b>	

**TABLE 1 (Cont.): YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)**

YER is a 20-hour work experience/training program for Comox Valley vulnerable youth funded by BC, Ministry of Children and Family Development. Youth were given a number to protect their anonymity. There were 28 youth participants (Numbers 73-100); 9 girls and 19 boys; ages 12 to 18.

**Table 1d: ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION WORK**

**Work events were attended by 1268 community members; an average of 45 per youth. Each youth worked with an average of 4 organizations.**

	<b>YOUTH TOTALS</b>
Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards: # 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100	23
Tsolum River Restoration Society: # 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99,	22
Oyster River Enhancement Society: # 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96, 97, 98, 100	21
Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society: # 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86, 90, 91, 93, 97	14
Fanny Bay Enhancement Society: # 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100	13
Morrison Creek Streamkeepers: # 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82	7
Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team: # 87, 88, 89, 91	4
Comox Valley Land Trust: Participant # 74, 76, 97	3
Comox Valley Natural History Society: # 74, 75	2
Comox Valley Project Watershed Society: # 84, 96	2
BC Hydro: # 99, 100	2
Courtenay and District Fish and Game Protective Association: # 82, 83	2
Ministry of Transportation: # 85	1
World Community Development Education Society: # 75	1
Comox Strathcona Regional District: # 86	1
Comox Lake Water Survey: # 83	1
<b>TOTAL 16 ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATED GROUPS</b>	

**Table 1e: COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

**Attended by total 467 community members; each youth spoke to about 17 people.**

Comox Valley Alternate Schools:	
Sandwich # 77, 81, 82, 83; Nala'atsi # 89, 93, 94, 96; Senior Alternate # 75	9
MCFD: Mental Health Team # 90, 97; Over Twelve Team # 86	3
Comox Valley Aboriginal Head Start Program, Pre-school Group: # 76, 95	2
Rotary Clubs: Comox # 84; Cumberland Centennial # 92	2
Glacier View Lodge: # 73	1
Wachiay Friendship Centre, Raven Back Youth Centre: # 78	1
Youth and Ecological Restoration Celebration: # 99	1
North Island College, Human Service Worker Program: # 85	1
Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society: # 74	1
Scouts Canada, First Comox Scout Troup: # 88	1
Comox Valley Woman's Resource Centre: # 98	1
Lake Trail Middle School, Grade 9: # 79	1
Arden Elementary School, Grade 4: # 91	1
Puntledge Park Elementary School, Kindergarten: # 87	1
The Linc (youth resource centre): # 80	1
<b>TOTAL 19 COMMUNITY PRESENTATION LOCATIONS</b>	<b>27</b>

**TABLE 2: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECT (YER)  
GOAL SUMMARY TABLE FOR OF APRIL 1, 2007 TO MARCH 31, 2008.**

Funded by BC, Ministry of Children and Family Development, 28 Comox Valley vulnerable youth were involved with YER in 2007/2008. All participants were given a number (73-100) to protect their anonymity and interviewed to document what they learned. Interview analysis was conducted by the program coordinator to verify youth's learning accomplishments and were categorized by percentages. Youth quotes are given in the main text.

**GOAL #1: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Cooperation, Support and Compassion; Positive Role Models and Mentoring; Increased Community Capacity and Caring.	
100%: Participant # 80, 82,	2
75%: Participant # 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89, 92, 93, 95, 96, 99	17
50%: Participant # 76, 86, 88, 90, 91, 94, 97,	7
25%: Participant # 98, 100	2

**GOAL #2: GAINING VALUED WORK EXPERIENCE**

Data Collection Methods; Working with Tools; and Job Variety.	
100%:	0
75%: Participant # 78, 79, 80, 85,	4
50%: Participant # 73, 74, 76, 77, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 91, 92, 95, 96, 97,	14
25%: Participant # 75, 81, 86, 89, 90, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100	10

**GOAL # 3: IMPROVING ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Ecosystem Cycles and Interconnections; Identification Techniques for Plants, Animals and Fish; Understanding Environmental Impacts.	
100%: Participant # 80	1
75%: Participant # 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 95, 96, 99,	20
50%: Participant # 86, 90, 93, 94, 97,	5
25%: Participant # 98, 100	2

**GOAL #4: INCREASING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

Meaningful Participation and Empowerment; Commitment, Respect and Responsibility; Patience and Endurance; Accomplishment, Self-esteem and Success.	
100%:	0
75%: Participant # 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 92, 93, 95, 97, 99	15
50%: Participant # 76, 81, 84, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 94, 96, 100	11
25%: Participant # 98,	1

**GOAL #5: ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Public Speaking and Education; Active Listening and Engagement; Interpersonal Relationships.	
100%:	0
75%: Participant # 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96,	15
50%: Participant # 73, 75, 76, 81, 86, 88, 89, 90, 94, 97, 99	11
25%: Participant # 98, 100	2

**TABLE 3a: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)  
BUDGET TABLE FOR APRIL 1, 2007 TO MAR 31, 2008.**

Expenses, income and in kind contributions required to conduct work experience and training program for vulnerable youth in the Comox Valley. YER 2007/2008 funding was provided by BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

<b>Expense Item</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>In-kind Contributions</b>
Program Delivery	\$22,310.00	MCFD \$34,000.00	Training \$3,000.00
Administration	\$2,000.00	Interest \$482.93	YER Report \$1,500.00
Evaluation	\$3,000.00		
Honouraria	\$1,050.00		
Equipment	\$519.63		
Mileage	\$3337.20		
Supplies	\$1,681.13		Work Tools \$300.00
Miscellaneous	\$584.00		Celebration \$250.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$34,481.96</b>	<b>\$34,482.93</b>	<b>\$5,050.00</b>

**TABLE 3b: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECT (YER)  
MONTHLY EXPENDITURES FOR APRIL 1, 2007 TO MAR 31, 2008.**

Month	Total	Fees	Honour	Mileage	Equip.	Supplies	Misc.
Apr/07	5,637.44	3,900.00	100.00	645.75	519.63	311.61	160.45
May/07	5,374.20	4,560.00	200.00	493.65		92.62	27.93
June/07	3,059.02	2,400.00	200.00	193.95		222.67	42.40
July/07	266.44	240.00		18.90			7.54
Aug/07	1333.76	1,200.00		114.75		12.24	6.77
Sept/07	1,771.50	1,440.00		166.05		158.68	6.77
Oct/07	5,316.14	4,320.00	100.00	679.95		208.65	7.54
Nov/07	4,719.37	3,840.00	250.00	428.85		189.90	10.62
Dec/07	1,511.88	960.00	100.00	90.90		348.82	12.16
Jan/08	763.64	720.00		27.00		8.33	8.31
Feb/08	3,361.23	2,880.00		428.85		40.43	11.95
Mar/08	1,367.34	850.00	100.00	48.60		87.18	281.56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34,481.96</b>	<b>27,310.00</b>	<b>1,050.00</b>	<b>3,337.20</b>	<b>519.63</b>	<b>1681.13</b>	<b>584.00</b>

**APPENDIX A: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – July 2004 to March 2008.**

Youth work with community members to restore the health of our local watersheds, building healthy relationships with both the human and natural worlds. They are required to give oral presentations about their YER experience on completion of the program.

**Seventy-three Comox Valley groups benefited from YER services – July/2004 to Mar/2008**

Six youth agency groups referred clients

Twenty-seven environmental stewardship groups had youth conduct ecological restoration work

Forty community groups were given presentations by the youth about their YER experience

**Six groups referred youth from July 2004 to March 2008:**

- Ministry of Children and Family Development:  
Probation Services; Mental Health; Parent Teen Mediation
- John Howard Society of North Island
- Comox Valley Community Justice Centre
- Comox Valley Alternate Schools:  
Nalata'atsi; Sandwick; Independent Learning; Senior Alternate; Contract Tutoring
- Comox Valley Youth Resource Society
- Comox Valley Family Services

**Twenty-seven groups had youth do ecological restoration work July 2004 to March 2008:**

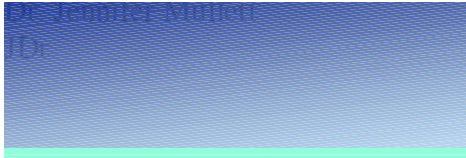
- Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards
- Oyster River Enhancement Society
- Tsolum River Restoration Society
- Hart Watershed Society
- Morrison Creek Streamkeepers
- Comox Valley Natural History Society
- Comox Valley Land Trust
- Comox Valley Watershed Assembly
- Perseverance Creek Streamkeepers
- Sunrise Rotary Club
- Georgia Strait Alliance
- Comox Valley Project Watershed Society
- Natural Journeys Society
- Fanny Bay Enhancement Society
- Cumberland Community Forestry Society
- Comox Valley Environmental Council
- Comox Valley Sustainability Network
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- BC Hydro, Bridge Coastal Fish & Wildlife Restoration Program
- Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society
- Courtenay and District Fish and Game Protective Association
- World Community Development Education Society
- Comox Valley Water Research
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ministry of Environment
- Comox Strathcona Regional District
- Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team

**APPENDIX A (cont.): YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER) COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – July 2004 to March 2008.**

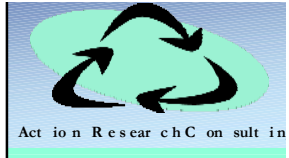
Youth work with community members to restore the health of our local watersheds, building healthy relationships with both the human and natural worlds. They are required to give oral presentations about their YER experience on completion of the program.

**Forty community groups had youth give presentations July 2004 to March 2008:**

- John Howard Society, Staff Meeting
- Comox Valley Youth Resource Society
- Courtenay Kiwanis Club
- Comox Valley Community Justice Centre
- Comox Valley Project Watershed Society
- Comox Valley Watershed Assembly
- St. Joseph Hospital Adolescent Support Group
- Sandwick Alternate School
- Puntledge Park Elementary School, Grade 4
- Puntledge Park Elementary School, Kindergarden
- Brooklyn Elementary, Grade 5
- Courtenay Elementary, Grade 5/6
- Courtenay Middle School, Grade 8
- Ecole Aspen Park Middle School
- Lake Trail Middle School, Grade 9
- Arden Elementary School, Grade 4
- Airport Elementary School
- Senior Alternate School
- Contract Tutoring Program
- Independent Learning Program
- Nala'atsi Program
- Roseberry Pre-School
- Comox Valley Naturalists
- Glacier View Lodge Society
- Tsolum River Restoration Society
- Comox Valley Boys and Girls Club, Voices Choices Group
- Wachaiy Friendship Centre, Raven Back Youth Group
- Youth and Ecological Restoration Celebration
- Comox Valley Aboriginal Head Start Program
- Oyster River Enhancement Society
- Ministry of Children and Family Development, Mental Health Team
- Ministry of Children and Family Development, Over Twelve Team
- Courtenay and District Fish and Game Protective Association, Monthly Meeting
- The Linc
- Comox Rotary Club
- North Island College, Human Service Worker Program
- North Island College, Human Services Articulation Conference
- Scouts Canada, First Comox Scout Troup
- Cumberland Rotary Club
- Comox Valley Women's Resource Society
- North Island College, Articulation Conference



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APPENDIX B: Letter of support from Community Psychologist, Dr. Jennifer Mullett  
 To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the Youth Ecological Restoration (YER) Program, coordinated and managed by Wendy Kotilla. As a community psychologist I have had the opportunity to research, evaluate and observe many different programs and projects dedicated to the positive development of youth. I was the evaluation consultant to the projects approved by the Queen Alexandra Foundation and I am also currently a Board member of the Community Youth Development Coalition, an organization that was created to provide a network and support to community youth development projects throughout the province. In this capacity I have seen many innovative projects and Wendy Kotilla’s program stands out as one of the most innovative and successful. Let me tell you why Wendy’s program is unique from my critical perspective as an evaluator.

In the program YER, the youth do not simply receive a service or “serve” time in the community. They engage in a project that contributes to the sustainability of the earth and at the same time learn a sense of responsibility, a work ethic and an ethos that will remain with them long after the program is finished. They are able to experience the feeling of satisfaction and self worth that comes with working with other members of the community on a worthwhile task. The evaluations that Wendy Kotilla has painstakingly maintained throughout indicate that for some youth this was a life altering event. They had not previously experienced working side by side with volunteers and being treated as an equal by older members of the community. In turn, some members of the community revised their opinions of “young people”.

There are unique characteristics to this program that contribute to its success:

- The ability to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of particular youth
- A safe environment for youth to learn new skills
- The sense of responsibility for the community that is nurtured
- The extensive partnerships that Wendy Kotilla has developed and maintained
- The opportunity for the youth to learn practical “marketable” skills such as social skills and public speaking
- The opportunity for youth to reengage and connect with the systems of which they are part in a positive way
- The dedication and commitment of Wendy Kotilla to youth and to continuous improvement of the program

In summary, I feel that the YER program is a model from which many lessons may be learned and I am sure that under the guidance and commitment of Wendy Kotilla it will continue to evolve. The committee that approved the original funding for the start up of the project regards this program as “one of our greatest success stories”.

Sincerely, Jennifer Mullett, PhD  
 Director, Action Research Consulting